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T W O
S E R M O N S,

P R E A C H E D

In the PARISH CHURCH of LAYCOCK, *WILTS*:

THE *FORMER* ON FEBRUARY 8, 1782;

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation, for a

P U B L I C F A S T:

THE *LATTER* ON JULY 29, 1784;

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation, for a

G E N E R A L T H A N K S G I V I N G,

F O R T H E

P E A C E.

By EDWARD POPHAM, D. D.

Rector of CHILTON-FOLIAT, and *Vicar* of LAYCOCK, *WILTS*.

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S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D O N

F E B R U A R Y 8, 1782:

Being the DAY appointed by PROCLAMATION,

F O R A

P U B L I C F A S T.



A S E R M O N, &c.

J E R E M I A H, CHAP. xiv. V. 17, 18.

Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the Virgin Daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.—If I go forth into the field, then behold, the slain with the sword; and if I enter into the city, then behold, them that are sick with famine.

THE tears thus described as flowing in so copious an effusion from the eyes of *Jeremiah*, are tears at once of devout humiliation before his avenging God, and of tender sympathy with his devoted *Jerusalem*: which is called the *Virgin Daughter*, because at that time totally inviolate by any victorious hostile Arms; yet fated to be broken with a great breach on account of her numerous internal distractions and convulsions, and in allusion to a rending of the limbs and dismembring the parts of the natural body.

To excite the tears of penitence and pity; of repentance towards God, and of compassion to man; of fellow-feeling

with the distressed, and charity to the deluded; to urge the fervour of benevolent supplication in behalf of a *divided and disjointed Empire*, that **The God and Father who maketh sore would bind up, that He who woundeth would make whole*, this is the true purpose of the present awful, and, we trust, salutary Solemnity.

Awful it surely is, when the whole National Body of a People are at the same hour professedly prostrate together in the dust before God; and the Spirit of humiliation appears to *†run down like precious ointment from the head of Aaron to the skirts of his cloathing, from him that weareth purple and a crown to him that is cloathed with a linen frock*. And salutary will this *†blowing of the trumpet in Zion and sanctifying of the Fast* assuredly prove, if we make it *an acceptable day to the Lord: acceptable* to Him in becoming truly edifying to us, thro' the successful tendency of so emphatical an instrument to awaken and effectuate those thoughts and feelings which directly prompt to amendment of heart and life; and thence infer a preclusion of those condign tremendous penalties, which the rectitude of the God *§with whom is no variableness*, has annexed to obstinate disobedience and incorrigible impenitence.

All external Religion which is not directed to this great terminating point, far from a diminution of guilt, or even a palliation

* *Job* v. 18. † *Psalms* cxxxiii. 2. † *Joel* ii. 15. § *St. James* i. 17.

palliation, is in fact a daring insult on the sublime Majesty and immaculate Sanctity of our Maker. Yet, by a devout contemplation of the divine Judgments, all of them sent forth upon the earth for purposes plainly worthy of the divine perfections, that **the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness*, it is in our own power to turn the judgments themselves eventually into blessings. But, as we have refused, often refused, to hear God speaking to us *in the †still small voice*, He now summons us to hear Him amidst those horrors, which no others can surpass; those horrors of War, that scourge and scandal of the human Species! and holds up the Sword, ‡*the Sword drunk with blood of the slain*, amidst the mutual butchery of *Civil Discord*, which is so lively painted by the *Prophet*, and so tragically exemplified in the *present period* of trouble and rebuke, §*I will dash them one against another, even the Fathers and the Sons together, saith the Lord*. Who is there amongst us, that does not add, ||*O thou Sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still*.

But the most dreadful of the divine alarms are calculated to awaken in us a just sense of God and of ourselves. When *Jonah* slept amidst the fury of the Tempest, that threatened every moment to overwhelm the vessel, the Mariners themselves

**Isaiah* xxvi. 9. †*I Kings* xix. 12. ‡*Deuteronomy* xxxii. 42. §*Jeremiah* xiii. 14. ||*Jeremiah* xlvii. 6.

selves, tho' Pagans, struck with a pious horror, cried out,
**What meanest thou, O Sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God.*

And what was the voice of Nature in them, must be the voice of Religion and Conscience in us. We too, (asleep as many of us are) must repair to the God, whose waves and whose storms are at *this time* going over us. The devotion of our Church is admirably expressive of these sentiments in the prayer which She has provided to be used by Mariners in similar circumstances: *We confess that when we have been safe, and seen all things quiet about us, we have forgot Thee our God, and refused to hearken to the still voice of thy Word, and to obey thy commandments. But now we see how terrible Thou art in all thy works of wonder, the great God to be feared above all: and therefore we adore thy divine Majesty, acknowledging thy power, and entreating thy goodness.*

Every appearance of awful, impending danger, every pressure of heavy distress is proposed, in the nature of it, as a powerful means of awakening and enforcing such sentiments, and with them such reflections.

But if we *at this time*, amidst what we feel and what we fear, do seriously reflect, we cannot but be desirous to search into
the

the immediate, exciting cause of the events to which we owe such painful sensations and just apprehensions; and to ask, **Whence come wars and fightings amongst us?* The Apostle St. James has answered us in another question; *Come they not even from your lusts which war in your members?*

It is self-government and a steady command of the affections and passions of our nature, which is, under God, the source, strength and security of all peace and safety: and it has been the want of this, which has made the History of the World, from the first ages of it to the present, little more than the History of Human Discord; whose Volumes are like the roll of the book spread before the Prophet, wherein †*was written, within and without, nothing but lamentations, and mourning, and woe.*

The unbridled †*Lust of the flesh, the Lust of the eyes, and the Pride of life*, set men loose from all command, as tho' they were formed to be governed by the consent not of their reason, but of their passions.

The Lust of the flesh, Sensuality, plunges them into black bewitching pollutions, into bitter and extensive injuries, that spring from adulterous lewdness, and from the woe, sorrow, contention, and frequent §*wounds without cause*, that are inflicted and suffered either in blind fury, or in romantic blood-thirsty

*St. James iv. 1. †Ezekiel ii. 9, 10. †I John ii. 16. §Proverbs xxiii. 29.

thirsty absurdity. For the Cup of drunkenness is ever full to the brim with that poison which makes men fools and brutes ; and drenches both their bodies and souls with the very dregs of idiocy and bestiality ; so truly hath the Prophet said, **Whoredom and wine take away the heart.*

The Lust of the eyes, Covetousness, chained down to the toil of acquiring wealth and the anxiety of securing without the least conception of enjoying it, is an abject idolatry to *Mammon*, exclusive of all love of God or our neighbour ; which benumbs the feelings, particularly the social ones of the heart ; darkens with a gloss *the eyes even of the wise* ; is, in oppression, *†as a sweeping rain which leaves no food* ; counteracts the liberal purposes of a Providence ; steels itself against both human scorn and divine abhorrence, and, after all, *‡pierces itself through with many Sorrows.*

The Pride of Life, the passionate love of Greatness and Power, as it operates in its extravagant aims, is equally destructive of the common safety and repose : whether it strives to exalt Princely claims above social compact and the unalienable rights of human kind ; or madly disdaining the necessary distinctions of Society, and the supremacy and controul of
Law

**Hosea iv. 11. †Proverbs xxviii. 3. ‡1 Timothy vi. 10.*

Law, involves in one ruin with it all real Liberty, Strength, and Security.

We see then *whence come wars and fightings*; they come *from our lusts*, that rebel against the power, and eclipse the light of reason and conscience; and transfer to bodily sense and mere animal appetite the supreme command. Were only the instinctive principles of our bosoms affectionately cherished by the rational powers, this could not be: but reason is, perhaps, often less busy in guiding instinct than in suppressing it. The effect is both inward and outward, personal and public, **confusion and every evil work*.

It were here easy for us to exclaim against those whom Divine Providence hath placed in this world above us; against the luxury and levity which make Them too often lost to the ends and uses of their rank and wealth, and unnerves their powers both of council and of action: the corrupt, degrading baseness of the Venal, the grasping pride of the Aspiring, the treacherous simulation of the Subtle, and the tame languor (amidst the loudest calls) of the Supine and Indolent.

But we are much less concerned to pursue Public Calamities to their spring, than to the follies or faults of other orders

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of

**St. James iii. 16.*

of Men: for with idle malignity we ascribe them, in exclusion of ourselves, to Those who precede us, who rule us, or, indeed, who *revolt* from us.

We have **every one, our own burthen to bear, and are, the least of us, a more important part of the Public than we chuse to own in some respects, though we often over-rate our importance in others.* It is in the power of every Brother of the lowest degree here present to stand forth in aid of the public distress by his attention to one momentous object, and that most intimate and exquisitely dear to him; and to lessen the public guilt by deducting that of *One Individual* from it at least, that is, by reforming *Himself*, lamenting *his own* offences, acknowledging *his own* wretchedness, *his* apostacy from the service of the true God to that of *Mammon*; *his* dishonouring of Parents, Masters, Pastors, Magistrates; *his* uncleanness, whoredoms, adulteries, frauds, thefts, drunkenness, slanderings, malice, hatred and revenge. To how many may be applied the words of *Nathan* in the application of his beautiful Parable to *David*, *§Thou art the Man!* Apply this, every One whose conscience here witnesseth against thee, to *thyself*; say, from a smitten heart, to thy own confusion, but to the glory of God, *I am the man; I have sinned unto the Lord: may His infinite mercy take away the iniquity of my Sin!*

And

**Galatians vi. 5. §II Samuel xii. 7.*

And is it not one animating incentive to us, every one to set seriously and actively about the work of personal amendment, so indispensable in order to the saving of our own souls, that by self-reformation each may contribute his share to the most glorious of all earthly and temporal achievements, *the saving of his Country*; which **righteousness alone can exalt and strengthen*, and of which *Sin is the inevitable reproach and ruin*?

We talk and we boast much of the love of *our Country*, and of an attendant zeal for her safety, grandeur, and prosperity. §

But there never existed a Nation on earth that was, or could be secure, great and happy, without a concurrence of her Members in the fear and love of God, and a general support of the majesty of Religion; without prevailing principles of

B 2

order

**Proverbs xiv. 34.*

§ This with many has been at best only a popular topic of discourse, so often pretended, where it was not, that it can scarcely be credited where it really is. The love of *our Country* is a duty incumbent on us not only as *Britons*, but as *Christians*. *St. Paul* expresses such ardent affection for his Countrymen that he could even *wish that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.* (*Romans ix. 3*) And our Saviour when He was come near the city, wept over it, (*St. Luke xix. 41*) poured out His blessed spirit in a tender agony of distress and pity when He beheld the present wretchedness, and impending destruction, of his dear *Jerusalem*.

order, peace, justice, sobriety, temperance and industry, impressed on the multitude of the People.

The good Christian, therefore, persevering as such, is the true Patriot, the loyal Subject, the useful Citizen, and the undaunted Soldier; those impressions depending on the principles from which he acts, and the truths which he propagates: without which, the pomp of Authority is pageantry; the wisdom of Councils folly; the strength of Armies weakness; the vaunt of Liberty imposture and licentiousness; the boasted bulwark of *National* wealth and affluence the natural source of pride, luxury, levity and corruption, that but more speedily precipitate the public ruin.*

Let us then, Brethren, challenge to *ourselves* a share of the pre-eminent honors which shall undoubtedly crown the Patriot Heroes that are, under God, the Preservers and Deliverers of their Country: and that, not by absurdly assuming any character or pretensions which do not belong to us; but by *Studying to be quiet, and to do our own business; every man wherein*

*We know the *Affyrian and Persian* Empires, the *Carthaginian and Grecian* Commonwealths; and *Rome* herself, the nurse of Heroes, and Empress of the whole World; all fell by the luxury of their own Subjects, more than by the arms of foreign nations.

§1 *Theffalonians* iv. 11.

whercin he is called therein abiding with God, by living soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* Thus shall we pursue, and that in the fear of God, the means adapted to the final levelling of all outward, present distinctions: for by these means †*You that hold the plough and glory in the goad*: ‡*You that put the hand to the nail and the right hand to the workman's hammer*; §*You that implore the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table*, shall be numbered with the children of God.

But dream not idly, Brethren, that should the measure of our *National* iniquities be finally filled up, by the neglect, the abuse, or the profanation of such means of grace as are still ministered to us, and in particular in the ordinances of *this Day*, and should the wrath of God come down, not to correct, but to consume and ||*take away both our place and nation*, that we, as a part of this great People, are too inconsiderable and obscure a part to feel in our persons and concerns the vengeance to be hurled on a guilty Land.

When the divine sentence is pronounced against *Babylon*, it is declared, ***I will break in pieces with thee the Shepherd and his flock: and with thee will I break in pieces the Husbandman and his yoke of oxen: and with thee will I break in pieces Captains and Rulers.*

* *Titus* ii. 12. †*Ecclesiasticus* xxxviii. 25. ‡*Judges* v. 26. §*St. Luke* xvi. 21. ||*St. John* xi. 48. ***Jeremiah* xxi. 23.

Rulers. When the Prophet denounced the curse to the rebellious people that spurned at the divine Government, these are the marks and lineaments of the dominion which they were about to bend under in exchange for the most righteous and happy of all possible administrations, **Protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the King that shall reign over them: He will take your Sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots: and he will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war and instruments of his chariots: and he will take your fields and your vineyards and olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants: he will take your sheep and asses, your young men and your maid-servants, and put them to his work. And ye shall cry out in that day, and the Lord will not hear you.*

And as the great instrument of temporal judgments is the lawless dominion with which the †*Tyrant boasts that he can do mischief, tho' the goodness of the great King of nations continueth daily: so the great instrument of temporal blessings is a Government of equity coextensive with the Laws which it prescribes, and of lenity consistent with the Liberty which it secures. It is therefore by the Royal Psalmist thus described, ‡He shall judge the people according unto right, and defend the*
poor

*I Samuel viii. 9, 16, 18. †Psalm lii. 1, 2. ‡Psalm lxxii. 2, 4, 6, 7.

poor. He shall keep the simple folk by their right, defend the children of the poor, and punish the wicked doer. He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth. In his time shall the righteous flourish, yea and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. Happy are the people that are in such a case!

To pursue that happiness is the undisputed design of that plan and system of wholesome Laws, and that admirable form and structure of Government under which, however undeserved by us, we live: and that amidst all the frequent tempests about us, **Every man may sit safe under his own vine and his own figtree with peace in our borders and plenteousness in our garners.*

To pray for the stability, permanence and perpetuity of a Government thus constituted, and a Land thus blessed, and whereon depends our *leading quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty*, is undoubtedly a most capital article of our devotions in general, and of such as the present in particular, being good and highly acceptable unto God our Saviour; is an indispensable part of the observation of a day whereon we unite to fast, *not for †strife and debate: not to smite with the fist of wickedness; not to put on the face of moroseness,*
that

**Micah iv. 4. †Isaiah lviii. 4.*

**that sadness of the hypocrite's countenance which our blessed and benevolent Saviour forbids : but rather to anoint the head and wash the face, which He commands, to cherish sentiments, far from those of implacable enmity, †to be tender hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, which is ‡Peace on earth and good-will towards men: and which makes their mutual placability the stipulated condition of that forgiveness on this day so passionately implored. We are very laudably taught, therefore, in the Form provided for our immediate assistance to pray, that our unhappy Fellow Subjects may make themselves worthy of the divine pardon and forgiveness, and that we may not only have strength and courage to withstand, but grace to forgive and pity them. This is certainly language comprehensive and worthy of a Christian devout Solemnity.*

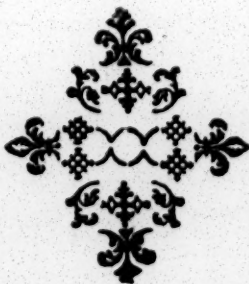
Finally, Brethren, let us with one heart and one voice earnestly pray, “ That our gracious SOVEREIGN may rejoice
 “ (*§in thy strength O LORD !*) amidst the maintenance of all
 “ those Royal Rights, which are so many trusts confided to
 “ Him for the public good, in the suppression of all sedition,
 “ conspiracy and rebellion ; in the dignity of His Character,
 “ wisdom of His Councils, and the glory of His Reign ; that,
 “ through the divine merciful appointment, He may be the
 “ healer of *every breach and every blow in the Virgin Daughter*
 committed

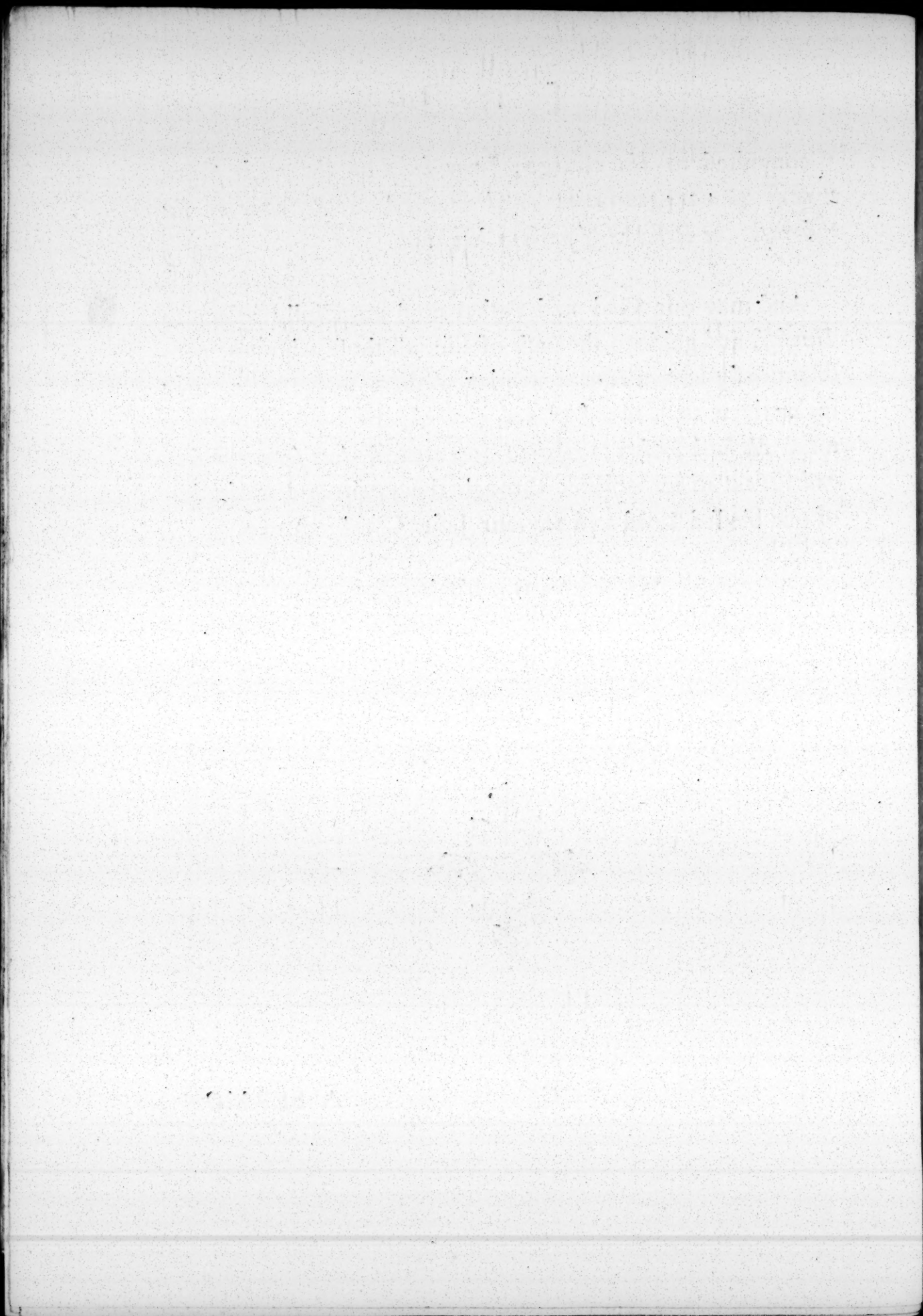
**St. Matthew vi. 16, 17. †Colloſſians iii. 13, ‡Luke ii. 14. §Pſalm xxi. 1.*

“ committed to his charge; **may build up the waste places,*
 “ *raise up many generations, and be called, the Repairer of the*
 “ *breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in!*

And may our God and Father most mercifully *restore* to *Himself*, and guide to the path of life, all those who now conscientiously *turn to Him in weeping, fasting, and praying*; may make them to *hear of joy and gladness, and cause all the bones which He hath broken to rejoice*; may turn *His face from our sins, and blot out all our misdeeds*, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Amen.

* *Isaiah lxxviii. 12.* † *Psalms li. 8, 9.*





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S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D O N

J U L Y 29, 1784:

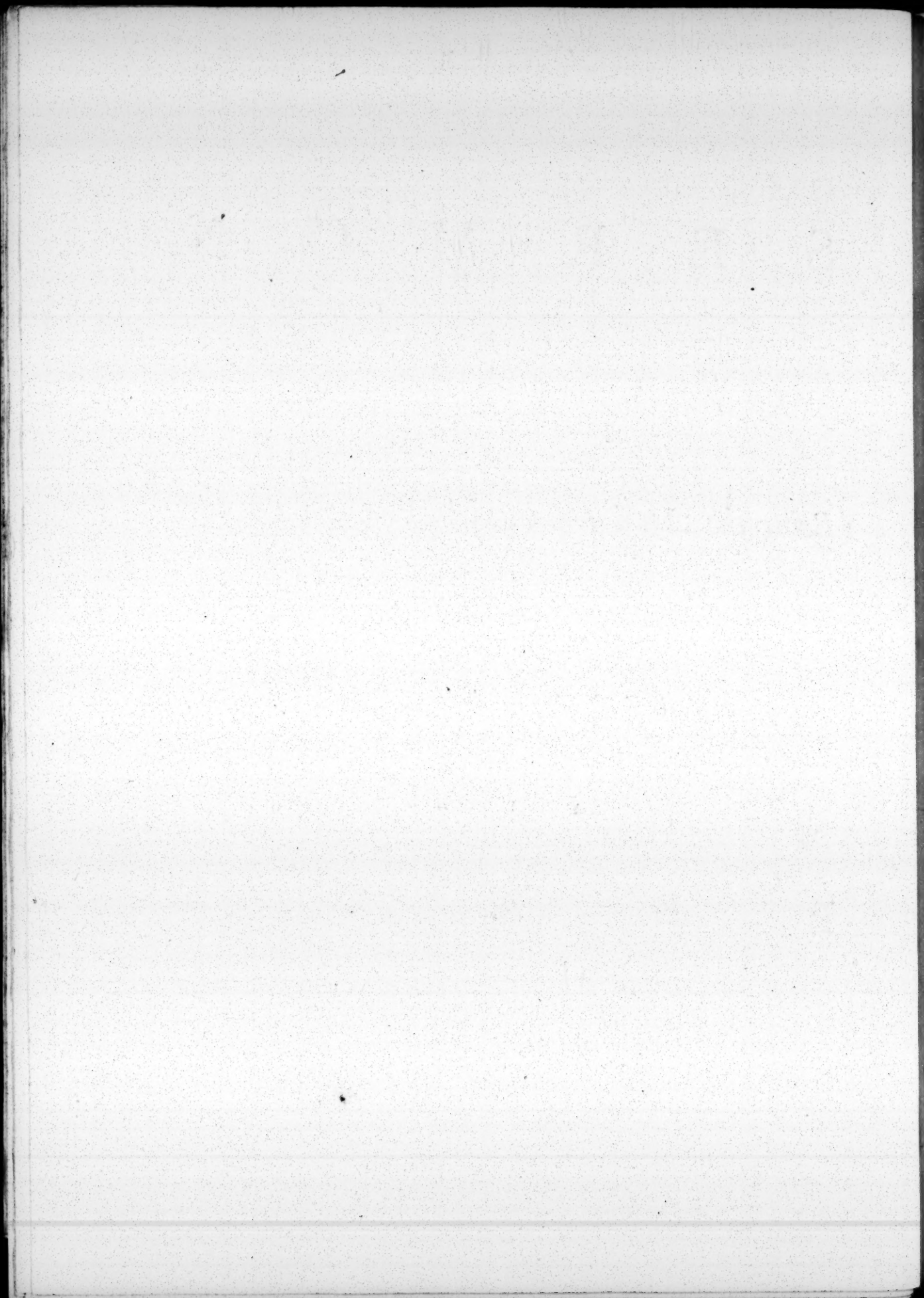
Being the DAY appointed by PROCLAMATION,

F O R A

GENERAL THANKSGIVING,

F O R T H E

P E A C E,





A S E R M O N, &c.

PROVERBS, CHAP. xvi. V. 32.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.

GREAT is that share in the things of this World which the Mighty and the Strong are able to assume; the lives and fortunes of nations and cities, the safety or destruction of millions is in them: and hence it is, that the generality of men, either possessed with slavish fear, or dazzled by the outward appearances of power, hath ever inclined to reverence those whose abilities to conquer have been equal to their wills; to adore them with Temples, and say, "They are Gods;" who, **being in honor and without understanding, might more properly be compared to the beasts that perish.*

Most of the worship in the Heathen World was paid to Deities such as these; who, from having lived the worst of men,

**Psalm xlix. 20.*

men, by all manner of injustice, by enslaving and destroying their fellow creatures, at length arrived to the honors of a Creator : in the same manner as the Crocodile and Serpent, had once in *Egypt* their Worshippers and their Priests. So apt are men to be governed by fear, and to suffer their reason to be misled by their senses !

It is to be feared that too many Christians are thus betrayed to approve what they have engaged to renounce, the pomps and vanities of this world ; to think it more glory to have dominion over others, than to maintain the empire of the man within them : wherefore else should the courage of the Warrior, be in greater reputation than the virtue of the Saint ? Wherefore should the One be attended with numbers ; be courted, caressed, and flattered by the labors of the Learned ; the Poet, the Orator, and the Historian, all conspiring in his praise ? while the the Other may be forlorn, rejected and despised ; and, like that Pattern of meekness which he professeth to follow, may have **scarce where to lay his head.*

It was the great intention of Our Saviour's coming into the World to reform the wrong notions which prevailed in it, to perfect the revelation of His will to mankind, and by living according to His own precepts, more effectually to recommend

**St. Matthew viii, 20.*

mend them to our practice. Hence He, who could have commanded **twelve legions of Angels*, yet *†took upon Him the form of a Servant*; He, who could have called for fire from Heaven on that insolent City which shut its gates against Him, yet rebukes His Disciples, who desired He would consume it, with *‡Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of*: thereby giving them to understand that powerful anger is too apt to disbelieve *§that much more honorable it is to save men's lives, than to destroy them*: thereby illustrating, by His example, what He had before spoken by His Servant Solomon, in the words of the Text, *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*.

We are here called together by the voice of Public Authority to offer our unfeigned praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God, for his great loving kindness in putting an end to the late *bloody, extended, and expensive War*; the bitter consequences of which, cannot but be deeply imprinted on every serious and considerate mind.

As this is a Day of Thanksgiving we need not turn it into a Day of Sorrow, by entering into a particular description of the various miseries of the late War. The loss of so many gallant lives, freely and bravely devoted to the service of
their

**St. Matthew xxvi. 53. †Philippians ii. 7. ‡St. Luke ix. 55. §St. Luke. ix. 56.*

their Country, must always claim the sighs and tears of their fellow Christians and fellow Subjects: and every good man will sympathize with the mournful Parent, the disconsolate Widow, and the helpless Orphan.

We may now look forward to the more pleasing part of the Prospect, for Peace seldom fails to produce unanimity, piety, virtue, lenity and meekness; those social blessings which the doctrine of the Text tends more immediately to establish, and therefore very proper to make a part of our meditations on this day.

If we take the words of the Text in a religious light, the superiority must needs be manifest. No one can doubt but the angry Ruler of other men must in his moral capacity give place to the dispassionate master of himself.

It is often observed, and observed to the great honor of that Sex, whose distinguishing character it is to be of a soft, gentle disposition, and averse to war and tumults; that These are They who most excel in virtue, who abound most in all the methods of holy worship and devout piety. On the contrary, Men, and of these more especially the Conquerors of Men, as they have had more haughty thoughts, they have had more wicked ones likewise, and their sin has been often equal to their power.

Indeed

Indeed the furious man must abound in transgression; if he has dominion, this gives him but the greater opportunities of being more enormously wicked, and of doing whatever outrage his impetuous anger may suggest. Most surely the preventing grace of God dwells only with the humble Spirit. The fervency of devotion is inconsistent with that of passion: nor can he ask **forgiveness of his own trespasses who doth not forgive those that trespass against him*; nor can *†he love his enemies, or bless them that persecute him, or pray for them that despitefully use him*. Our blessed Saviour, in the very article of death, not only prays for His Murderers, but pleads their excuse; *‡Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

Those peculiar duties commanded in the Gospel, are in vain commanded to him whose passion hath got the better of his reason. What humble reliance upon the wisdom of Providence, what hope of assistance from the mercies of the Almighty, will that Man entertain whose whole *§trust is in the multitude of his chariots and of his horsemen*; whose Religion, according to the usual phrase, is carried at his sword's point, and *||His strength is the law of his justice?*

***The still small voice of God's Spirit, is it easily heard amidst the noise, confusion and disorder of a Camp?* The joy of
D heart

**St. Matthew vi. 15. †St. Matthew v. 44. ‡St. Luke xxiii. 34. §Isaiah xxxi. 1. ||Wisdom of Solomon ii. 11. **I Kings xix. 12.*

heart which is consequent on the taking of a City, is it sober and temperate? or does it spend itself most commonly in rapine and injustice, in all manner of luxury and intemperance, and in crimes too horrid to mention?

How difficult is it, how impossible almost, that strict morality should be preserved! That a War, begun on a lawful account, should be supported and carried on, but by such means at least as do not strictly agree with the sublimer duties of Christianity! At best the Warrior in the eyes of God cannot be so pleasing as the Peaceful: witness that saying of the Almighty to *David*, when He permits him not the honor to build Him a Church, the Man in other respects after his own heart; **But because thou hast shed blood abundantly, and made great Wars, thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon earth in my sight. Behold, a Son shall be born unto thee who shall be a Man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.*

Most certain it is, that as Religion never so well flourishes as in times of peace and rest, so none are so religious as those of a meek and quiet spirit; who being least inclined of themselves

**I Chronicles xxii. 8, 9.*

themselves to vindicate themselves, are more ready to †*cast their care upon Him*, whom they believe to care for them.

The angry Conquerors, tho' they take the city, they give place to a much worse **adversary, the Devil*; their gain is their loss: ‡*for what profit is it to gain the whole world and lose ones own soul?* Will our might defend us from the terrors of the grave? Will the relentless Judge be bribed with our spoils? In the awful day of account will military atchievements, or rather, works of mercy be best esteemed and most rewarded? ||*He that hath shewed no mercy, he it is that shall have judgment without mercy.* §*According to the measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Let not a temporal crown then, weighty and hazardous at best, be more sought after than ***an eternal weight of glory!* Let not the virtues which God delights most to honor, be least esteemed in the eyes of Men; but let us see and act so that hereafter we may joyfully feel, the happy effects of meekness and peace, to be infinitely superior to those of war-like strength!

We need not go beyond the grave to prove the greater excellence of these virtues; the proposition is true, even ab-

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†*I Peter v. 7.* **II Peter v. 8.* ‡*St. Matthew xvi. 26.* ||*James ii. 13.*
§*St. Mark iv. 24.* ***II Corinthians iv. 17.*

fracted from Religion; and in this light I shall now proceed to consider it.

Meekness in itself shews greater wisdom and greater courage than the might of the Angry: tho' it should not be successful with respect to others, it is more safe and beneficial with respect to ourselves; more easy and pleasant, more glorious and productive of what the other not so well aims at, even the ruling of other men.

Before the Gospel **brought life and immortality to light*, or to the †*Poor in spirit promised the Kingdom of Heaven*; while yet the World was uninformed by infallible Revelation, that ‡*Anger resteth in the bosom of fools*, and §*that an hasty spirit exalteth folly*: By the light of reason, Heathens could discern, and with great strength of argument have proved, that no one ought to be termed wise, who was not so in the government of himself.

One Sect of the wise amongst them, made all perfection to consist in being without passion. He that came nearest to perfection in his practice, who was justly termed the wisest of them all, was not any Hero, or skilful Soldier, but
Socrates,

*II Timothy i. 10. †St. Matthew v. 3. ‡Ecclesiastes vii. 9. §Proverbs xiv. 29.

**Socrates*, a Man renowned for his exceeding meekness; who, tho' deficient in the art of governing others, had the better discretion of governing himself.

Indeed the first notion of wisdom is, that it be sedate, cool, and void of passion; that it be able to weigh the arguments on every side, and only pronounce after the most mature deliberation. Can this possibly exist where anger burns, hasty in its resolves, rash in its enterprises, and which hath nothing in view but the pleasure of revenge? The Warrior may be expert in marshalling his army, and giving his necessary orders in the battle, wise to circumvent and ambush his enemy, to undermine the city, or counterplot the foe; he may have the wisdom of the Serpent to ensnare and destroy: but surely, that wisdom of God, who is merciful and long-suffering,

**Poor Socrates (who next more memorable?)
By what he taught and suffer'd for so doing,
For truth's sake suffering death unjust, lives now
Equal in fame to proudest Conquerors.*

MILTON *Paradise Regain'd*, Book iii. V. 96.

Milton here does not scruple with *Erasmus* to place *Socrates* in the foremost rank of Saints; an opinion more amiable at least, and agreeable to that spirit of love which breaths in the gospel, than the severe orthodoxy of those rigid textuaries, who are unwilling to allow salvation to the moral virtues of the Heathen.

Thyer.

suffering, and wise to communicate His happiness to all, is the wisdom which man ought most to reverence, and with the greatest application endeavor to imitate.

But, both wisdom and Religion, the Warrior will allow to be the proper virtues of the peaceable and meek : courage is that of which he boasts, which he thinks will supply every other want. But neither is courage to be preferred before wisdom ; neither has he a right to the reputation of courage, who is not meek and **slow to anger* and successful violence ; to brutish fierceness as it is seen in a Tygres or a Lion, resistlessly impetuous, or cruel for the sake of prey : or to that which is consistent with the greatest cowardice, which a causeless fear of being oppressed itself, excites to be desperate in destroying others. To these indeed, he may have some pretence, but he is far from possessing the courage of a man, who is not secure in his own virtue ; who dares not pardon for fear of being injured again ; who trembles, and is disturbed, or thinks himself not safe while his enemy is possessed of either life or fortune.

Anger and cruelty, revenge and passion, necessarily arise from a sense of weakness, and are certain indications of cowardice and fear : while he that fights but to defend himself and
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** Joel ii. 13.*

his Country, and fights no longer than is necessary to Peace, makes the end of the Battle the end of Slaughter, and proclaims his pardon without exception; dares like *Cæsar* burn his enemies papers without appointing any to inspect them, lest he should think what became others to suffer, rather than what became him to inflict. Such a Person may claim the title of courage; a title which by no means the angry and passionate deserve.

The virtue of meekness has this further commendation above might, that it is more for the safety of the world. It is well known that the Universe subsists not but by the reciprocal aid of all its parts. Suppose we the Elements jarring together, each contending for superiority over the other; what would ensue but utter confusion, that original Chaos from which all things sprang, and to which they must return, when they cease to act in subserviency to one another? The same we may affirm of the World of Men, who were formed for mutual aid and benefit; and they no longer flourish than while they act in conformity to this design.

It was said of *Augustus*, and justly said, while he gave a loose to his ungoverned fury, and sent forth his proscriptions to revenge him of his enemies, *It had been better for the world, had he never been born.* But when this temper changed, and he followed his friends advice, and repented no injury till he
had

had repeated the Alphabet, the wishes of the World were changed likewise, and it was universally desired *he should never die*. Ruin and desolation, and all the miseries of sword and famine, were the sad attendants on his first disposition; joy and safety, ease and plenty, arts and sciences, in their utmost perfection, necessarily followed from his peace. Nor is it a small praise of this Prince and of this time, that **The Prince of Peace*, the Saviour of Mankind, chose then to make His appearance in the World. When the nations began *†to beat their swords into ploughshares*, and mankind seemed desirous of being reconciled to one another, then God thought it a proper season, to instruct them truly to be reconciled to Him.

Our Saviour is said to have come into the World, not to *‡send Peace on earth, but a sword*. Such, alas! the corruption of men, have miserably made to be an effect of His coming. But better the Angels sang at His birth, and such was the immediate end of His being born, that *§Glory might be to God on high, on earth peace, and good-will towards men*. It was by this only, that man could be capable of the blessing of Christ's Gospel; this itself, the greatest blessing that man can enjoy, on this side of Heaven.

The

**Isaiah ix. 6. †Isaiah ii. 4. ‡St. Matthew x. 34. §St. Luke ii. 14.*

The Heroes of their age, whose ambition it hath been to overcome others rather than themselves, were they described in their merciless conquests, the impetuosity of a deluge, the desolation of a plague, the terrors of fire, and the miseries of famine, must be joined to give us even an imperfect idea of them. They have been truly stiled the Scourges of the Almighty, let loose on nations whose sins were of the deepest dye, and called for God's severest vengeance.

We know that *David*, when he chose his punishment, dreaded much less the arm of the destroying Angel than of Man: and he chose the **pestilence* as a less evil *than but for three days to fly* before the fury of his enemies. Such †*great Benefactors of mankind* are these valiant Chiefs, these mighty men of War!

While the Meek are often and properly compared to the Sun moving amiably and orderly in its sphere, dispensing its
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benign

*II Samuel xxiv. 13.

†*They err who count it glorious to subdue
 By conquest far and wide, to over-run
 Large countries, and in field great battles win,
 Great cities by assault: what do these worthies,
 But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
 Peaceable nations, neighb'ring, or remote,
 Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
 Than those their Conquerors, who leave behind
 Nothing but ruin wherefoe'er they rove,*

benign influence around, useful and delightful to all; the angry Hero is more like a glaring Comet, according to its ancient system, the flaming ruins of some part of the Creation, which broke from its proper orb, and driving irregularly through the wide expanse, brings to every thing near it desolation and perplexity.

This only comfort the world has, if it be a comfort, that the anger of these Heroes is as fatal to themselves; they often meet with their deserved reward from others after they have been instruments of divine vengeance; in their turn they feel what they have inflicted: and never was any man much feared by many, but himself with just reason had as many to fear. Though one part of the world may adore him as a God, often the conspiracies of another make him
sensible

*And all the flourishing works of Peace destroy,
 Then swell with pride, and must be titled God's,
 Great Benefactors of mankind, deliverers,
 Worshipt with temple, priest and sacrifice:
 Till conqu'ror Death discover them scarce men,
 Rolling in brutish vices, and deform'd,
 Violent or shameful death their due reward.
 But if there be in glory ought of good,
 It may by means far different be attain'd
 Without ambition, war, or violence:
 By deeds of Peace, by wisdom eminent,
 By patience, temperance.—*

MILTON *Paradise Regain'd*, Book iii. V. 71.

fenfible he is a man : or if he efcape this impending blow, yet is his anger a punifhment to itfelf, often as it takes hold of Men, uſing them worſe than **the unclean Spirit thoſe whom it poſſeſſeth.* This uneaſy paſſion ſuffers the human mind to take no reſt ; it fits trembling on the lips, burning in the eyes, twitching in the nerves, boiling in the blood, diſtorting the countenance, ſhortening the ſpeech, blinding the underſtanding, diſtracting the mind, and urging men on to madneſs ; which, if it find no vent upon others, is ſure at leaſt to be fatal to itſelf. How ſhort is the pleaſure for which this anguiſh is borne ; And when the man is himſelf, and reaſon returns, how grievous to his ſight are the monuments of his fury ! How laſting the pain which the reflections on them produce ! When by anger we requite the injuries of our Enemy, we inflict a treble puniſhment on ourſelves. If the injury was ſmall, it was below our notice ; if great and heavy, much leſs ſhould we add to it of our own accord. Let us rather be *ſlow to anger*, that we leſſen the grievance our Enemy intends ; and that we may more ſurely be revenged of him, let us forgive him ; *†for in ſo doing we heap coals of fire on his head.*

The ſatiſfaction which ariſes to ourſelves upon having done our duty is inexpressible : you only can know who have taſted the pleaſure, how joyous and exquisite it is ! and

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**St. Luke ix. 39. †Proverbs xxv. 22.*

the remembrance of it endureth for ever. Contrary to the nature of all other pleasure it is not less durable because so great. That joy of heart which the Conqueror conceives, as it is seldom founded in sobriety and truth, and as it is very extravagant, so is it a short and hasty flash; like that of his own engines, is bright and noisy only for a moment, and then expires in vapour and smoke. But the joy of the Meek is always rational, and therefore necessarily always the same; it is ever joined in company with **Charity*, and like that virtue *never faileth*.

I shall mention but one more commendation of this excellence, which is, that it is much more productive of what angry Might not so well aims at, even the ruling of other men.

It is productive of the love and reverence of all: it captivates the minds of men, and is a much more certain way of securing their obedience, than by force and violence to enslave their bodies. How insensibly are men charmed to submit to it! How gladly are all its commands obeyed! We are not able because we are not willing to be free. It covers a multitude of offences in others, and no less in those who are possessed of it. It brings an excuse to every fault, and makes every virtue to be more charming. The dangers

**1 Corinthians xiii. 8.*

dangers which anger exposes us to, Meekness instantly removes from us. How many hands will it charge from striking and tongues from **shooting out their bitter words; those arrows from which no Eminence is safe; no guards, or walls, or force of arms, or might of the Angry can defend the Prince; which are only to be restrained and hindered from hurting by Meekness! What Spirit is so untameable as this will not subdue! See †David violently incensed against Nabal, but the Meekness of Abigail assuages the storm! This could melt even the fury of Saul into words of remorse and tenderness to David, ‡Is this thy voice, my Son David? thou art more righteous than I, thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. Though Esau was a rough man, and exceedingly provoked against Jacob, yet §a soft tongue breaketh the bone, and ||he ran to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. Had Jacob unwisely opposed force to force, his arms had lost what his policy had gained.*

The time permits me not longer to insist on a subject where it is difficult to stop what with pleasure might be said, and with much greater pleasure we all may practise. The glory of the Warrior is not every ones to attain; and God forbid that it should be in every ones will! There is no Man but hath it in his power to be meek. How happy were it, if we were wise as we are able; if we would thus endeavor to rule our
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**Psalm lxiv. 3. †I Samuel xxv. ‡I Samuel xxiv. 16, 17. §Proverbs xxv. 15. ||Genesis xxviii. 4.*

own Spirit, and be more than Conquerors by being more like Saints !

Thus we pursue the best wisdom, prove ourselves most truly courageous, useful to the World, easy in ourselves, and deserve the best praises and highest commendations of all good men. Unless **in vain we have learned Christ*, surely the *Makers of Peace* will no more be esteemed †*worthy of death or of bonds* ; no more be called by ignominious names ; but, as Our Saviour has pronounced them, §*they shall be called the Children of God*.

Let us therefore second their blessed endeavors, and shew forth our joy on this happy event not in riot and intemperance, but †*in the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price* !

There is nothing indeed that more promotes the honor of God or the happiness of mankind than Union and concord among ourselves. While *Jerusalem* remained, as the *Psalmist* describes it to have been ||*built as a City at unity with itself ; and Peace was within its walls* ; it was as the ***Mount Sion which might not be removed, and which was to stand fast for ever* ; but when ††*strife and unrighteousness were in the City, day and night going about within the walls thereof, mischief also and sorrow in*
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† **Ephesians iv. 20. †Acts xxvi. 31. §St. Matthew v. 9. †I Peter iii. 4. ||Psalm cxxii. 3. **Psalm cxxv. 1. ††Psalm lv. 9, 10, 11.*

the midst of it, and deceit and guile went not out of the streets; it became thenceforth an easy prey to the Assyrian, Babylonian and Egyptian Nations. The City fast founded on a rock was removed like a Cottage; and the joyous place became the seat of woe, the theme of lamentation.

When || *Ephraim* is against *Manasseh*, and *Manasseh* against *Ephraim*, and both against *Judah*, we may justly fear what the *Prophet* tells us, *that God's anger is not turned away, and that His hand is stretched out still.* For when men grow so strangely humorfome as not to accept of that which is so lovely in itself and beneficial to themselves likewise, we may look upon it as a judgment sent on them by God, who hath so blinded them, as heretofore He did the Jews, **that they should not perceive the things that belonged to their peace and to their true happiness, till they were hid for ever from their Eyes.*

As we know the rock on which they split, be we careful to avoid their fate! Now we are freed from the dangers and calamities of War, let us guard against the insinuating temptations of luxury and indolence, and studiously cultivate the true arts of Peace; by checking as much as possible that uncontrollable Spirit of licentiousness which pervades all ranks of People, and by instilling those principles which tend to promote Public Order, Integrity, and pure Religion.

England,

§ *Isaiah* xxiv. 20. || *Isaiah* ix. 21. **St. Luke* xix. 42.

*England, as a great commercial Nation, should look well to her own balance, and endeavor to establish a mutual intercourse and friendly alliance with every part of the Globe: like the wise Woman in the Proverbs, *should see that her merchandise is good, and that it brings her food from far; should work wool and flax, and work it willingly with her hands; should look well to the ways of her household, and not eat the bread of idleness. This is the business, this is the glory of the British Nation! So will her Children rise up and call her blessed; and her Husband, Our most gracious SOVEREIGN, have no more need of Spoil.*

Thus may we hope, by the blessing of God, to see Our || Jerusalem once more in prosperity; †every man under his vine and under his figtree eating the bread of Peace in comfort, joy and security! ‡Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God! Amen! Amen!

**Proverbs xxxi. || Psalm cxxviii. 6. †I Kings iv. 25. ‡Psalm cxliv. 15.*

F I N I S.

